



News Release

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State Fire Marshal Encourages Homeowners to make their Home Fire Fighter Accessible

February 3, 2005 - In the event of a fire, fire fighters need to be able to access your home easily, without the hindrances of locked gates, bars on windows and unreadable home address numbers.

"Homeowners take numerous measures to prevent fires in the home," said State Fire Marshal Andy Neumann. "But, if the unthinkable does happen, it's important that fire fighters have every chance to act fast."

The Office of the State Fire Marshal is encouraging homeowners to take the following steps to make their home accessible to an emergency crew.

Steps:

- Keep back fences shut, but avoid putting heavy locks on them, which can make it difficult for fire fighters to access the backyard in an emergency.
- Avoid putting tot-finder and pet-finder stickers on windows. Contrary to popular belief, these stickers can cause fire fighters to enter a burning home unnecessarily. Sometimes people forget to remove stickers after they purchase a home, or forget to take stickers off when a pet dies. It's better to alert fire fighters about trapped children or pets through verbal notification.
- Make sure home address numbers are visible and readable from the street. Numbers should be painted on the curb, as well as placed on the home in a prominent area.
- Keep doors to the garage, laundry room and kitchen shut at night. Should a fire break out, the smoke detectors should go off, but a shut door can save the house and people from fire. Likewise, sleep with bedroom doors closed, and make sure each family member knows how to test the door before opening it, in case of a fire.
- Forego installing security bars on bedroom windows unless they have releases from the inside.

Tips:

- If a smoke detector goes off, teach family members to test closed doors before opening them: Place the back of a hand on the door to check for heat, starting at the bottom of the door and
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working it up as high as possible. Then place the back of a hand on the doorknob (metal conducts heat better than wood - if there's any heat outside the door, the doorknob will be hot).

- If the door is not hot, crack open the door, stay low, and check for smoke. If smoke is present, use another way out.

Warnings:

- If a detector goes off, there are only seconds to respond. There is absolutely no time to gather possessions, pets and possibly even each other. It is best to leave the home immediately, and head to the prearranged meeting place and call 911 from a neighbor's home.
- Never go back into a burning home.

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